



interview
steps

The Five-Step Interview Process

Goal

Suggested Actions

step
1

Cultivate a comfortable environment and put the taxpayer at ease.

- Introduce yourself; engage in small talk (discuss the weather, difficulty in locating the site, apologize if long wait, etc.).
- Explain the tax return preparation process—the interview, how the information they provide will assist you in determining whether they must file a return, their eligibility for tax credits, etc.
- Allow the taxpayers to share any expectations, needs, and/or concerns by asking whether they have questions before beginning and encouraging them to ask questions throughout the process.
- Be friendly and respectful and speak clearly and simply.

step
2

Use active listening skills.

- Use nonverbal cues such as nodding, smiling appropriately, and making eye contact.
- Listen, then respond by restating, paraphrasing, and/or encouraging further dialogue.

step
3

Review the taxpayer's responses to the intake questions on Form 13614-C.

- Verify that all questions on (Form 13614-C) have been addressed and answered correctly. If the taxpayer checked the "Unsure" box, provide clarification and update response to "Yes" or "No".
- All corrections to taxpayer's information should be annotated on the approved intake and interview sheet prior to completing the return.
- Ask probing questions to clarify issues.
- Review all the information documents presented by the taxpayer including W-2s, 1099s, 1098s, etc.
- When you start the interview, use one or two open-ended questions, for example, 'Was there anyone else who lived in your home besides the people listed on this form'; this is essential information for determining Head of Household filing status.
- If the taxpayer's return does not fall within the scope of the program, (1) courteously explain that volunteer services are limited to those who fall within the scope of the program, (2) encourage the taxpayer to use the intake sheet in working with another tax service, and (3) thank the taxpayer for coming and express regret you cannot assist them.

step
4

Working with the taxpayer, complete the critical intake questions on (page 4 of Form 13614-C).

- Don't assume—use the interview tips and decision trees in Publication 4012 to confirm:
 - Marital status (filing status)
 - Number of qualifying exemptions
 - Eligibility for child tax credit
 - Eligibility for the earned income credit

step
5

Advise taxpayer of the next steps.

- Restate the return preparation process, quality review procedures, signature and recordkeeping requirements, etc. Make sure you have good contact information in case there are electronic filing issues.